



### Columbia Middle School

100 Eagle Drive  
Columbia, IL 62236  
Teacher: Patrice Bain

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Columbia Middle School is the sole middle school in Columbia Community Unit School District 4, in Monroe County, Illinois. Patrice Bain teaches 6<sup>th</sup> grade World History including Asia, Africa, and Europe. She developed her district's curriculum guide for 6<sup>th</sup> grade World History.

- ◆ Middle (5-8)
- ◆ 98% White
- ◆ 1% Hispanic
- ◆ 1% African American
- ◆ 1% Multiracial
- ◆ 7% free- and reduced-price lunch

In 2005 Patrice began a project on quizzing with a researcher at Washington University in St. Louis. She received the Smart Boards™ and clicker system through the research grant and began quizzing on a more regular basis. The research project provided the data on her students' impressive gains as a result of the pre and post-test quizzing. She now uses multiple choice quizzes in her classroom on a regular basis and has observed improvements for all students, and in particular her special education students and those who do not perform well on standardized tests.

Patrice gives pre-tests to prime her students for material to come. She says, "Our minds are kind of like drycleaners, when you go and ask for your jacket and the hanger comes by you have to find that hook where your jacket is. Your mind is kind of like that, you have to have something come around with a hook in order to put that information on and have it click. Part of the pre-test is establishing that hook so as they encounter new material, it suddenly makes a little bit more sense for them."

Patrice also has noticed that frequent quizzing with feedback reduces anxiety around tests and creates a game-like learning atmosphere in her classroom: "I think the quizzes are something the kids almost become desensitized to; because they have them so often, tests are really not anxiety-producing. There are no big red marks or bad feelings. It becomes similar to a video game where kids just want to up their score. So I think it just creates a safer environment for learning."

Results of a two-year research study conducted by researchers from Washington University in Patrice's social studies class, as well as an English grammar class at Columbia Middle School, suggest the following conclusions:

- Learning is enhanced by testing; frequent, short quizzes improve retention of material over time
- Similar learning benefits cannot be found from additional exposure or reading of material
- While all students benefit from testing and multiple opportunities to recall key information, struggling students in particular benefit from this kind of testing

Patrice uses a number of strategies to help her students review and internalize key material. For example, she has her students complete worksheets that summarize their understanding of big ideas and serve as tools for review later in the year.